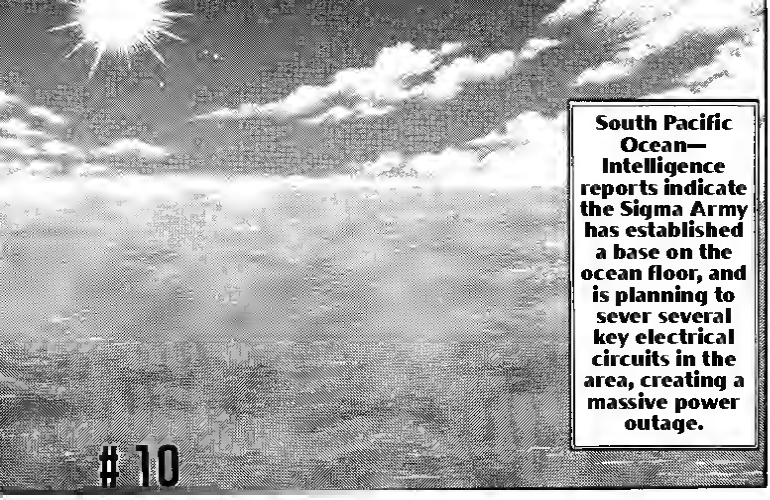
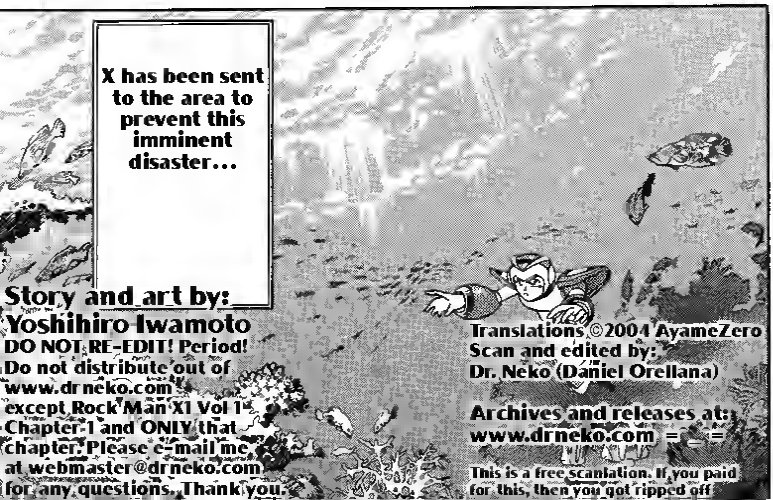

South Pacific Ocean— Intelligence reports indicate the Sigma Army has established a base on the ocean floor, and is planning to sever several key electrical circuits in the area, creating a massive power outage.

10

MERMAID



Story and art by:
Yoshihiro Iwamoto
DO NOT RE-EDIT! Period!
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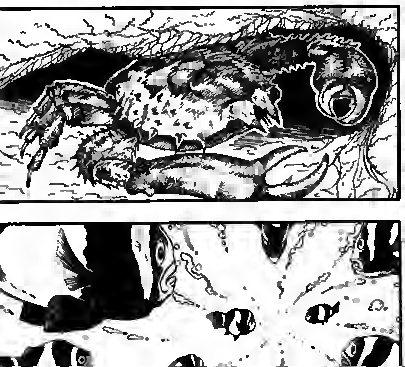
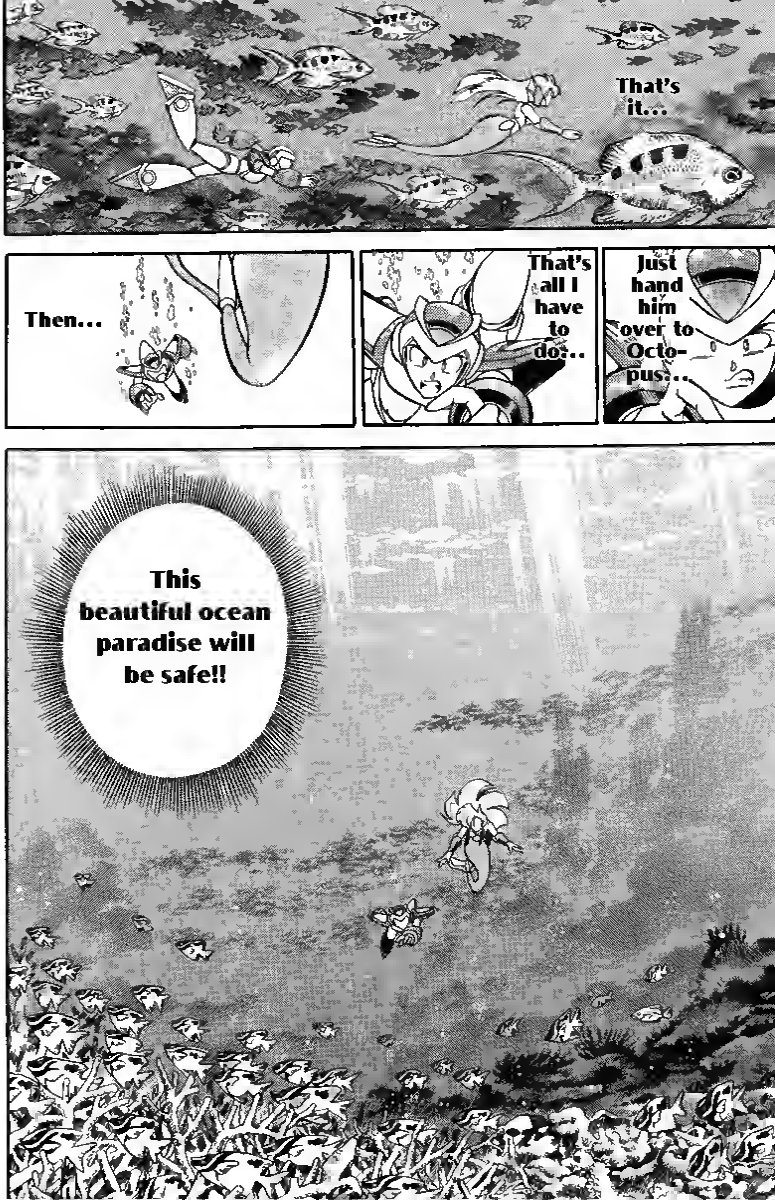
An attack?!
?
Aaa gh!!
Yaahh!
Get back !!
Damn! Whoooaa!
Aaghh!
...kay ?
A—are you o...
Ungh!

Oh...
Help me!!
Please, calm down! What's wrong?
What?! But I...I came here to come after him!
A huge reploid, Launch Octopus, has been after me!
Y— yeah...
REALLY ?!

Wait, you're coming too?
"Go-ing"? Going where?
Well, hurry up! Let's go!
Of course! There are tons of places around here that need policing...
Right. So I'll just take you somewhere safe, and—
.....
because I'm a *woman*?
Why ...
You can't come!
UNGH!!
!?

Wh—what the hell are you doing?!
You ain't my knight in shining armor, ya know.
Kiddo.


"Kiddo"?! Who the hell does she think she is...
See ya!


That's it...
Then...
That's all I have to do...
Just hand him over to Octo-pus...
This beautiful ocean paradise will be safe!!

Geez! You guys don't let up!!
Say, is this route really safe?
Are you saying you don't trust me?! Geez!
But the "wow" factor ends there.
I'm not a water-type, *okay?!*
He's... he's an amazing fighter!!

Huh —?!
ガコン
Fine! You're on your own, then! Hmph!
I didn't say that!
AAAAAGHHH!!

!!
I can't maneuver- under- water ...
!!
UAAAAGHH!!
Where is he?!
Where did he go...
Where is he?!

Ungh! He's right below me!!
Then I've gotta aim for the head...!
!?
And his body is invincible?!
Uaagh!
Uaagh!
Let me go!!

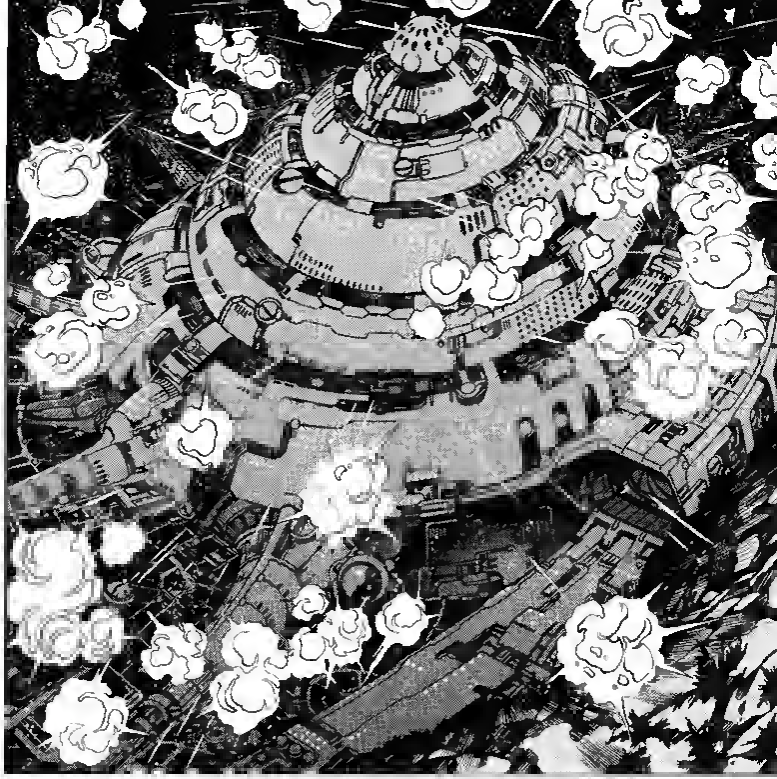
Huf... huf...
"cough"
Kiddo! You did great! Now let's amscray!!
He's lost so much blood...
.....
I... I...
we... should...
Yeah, well. Gotta cut your losses, ya know? So, while he's distracted...
Run away...?

Why aren't you scared?!
What, are you crazy?! You don't stand a chance in hell!!
.....
I am scared ...
Uh...

But my motivation is something even stronger than fear...
Don't be such a show-off!
Aaa!
And besides ...

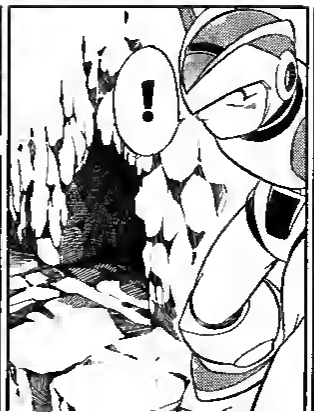
Run from your enemy but once, and you can never face him again.

...I can't turn and run now.
So of course...
Show me where you're hurt.
Ah...
I'm actually a rescue-type...
so I can administer first-aid.
Run from your enemy but once, and you can never face him again.



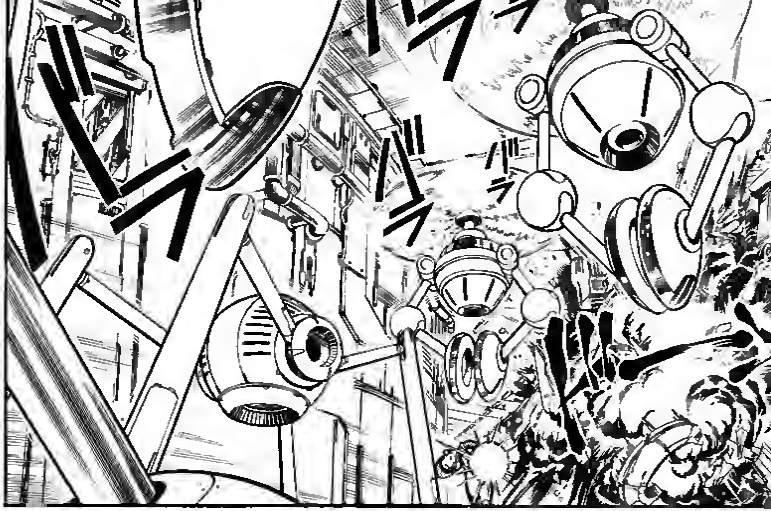
Get in!

Stay in there where it's safe!


!

If she stays with me she'll get hurt...

Kiddo !!
Thanks for your help.
Oh yeah— I didn't even get your name ...
ドゴボ
Aah!
Oh man! A whole army of them!!
Boy!!
ドゥ
This is where I say goodbye!
No... I don't...
My...my name is...
I don't even *deserve* a name...
I don't ...



AAAUGHH!

But I'll blow them all away with one shot!!
They set a trap— a cheap trap!!

Neutral-
ized...?!
?
How
...
A
Saidos
solu-
tion?
!?
UAA
AAA
GHH!!

It neutralizes your buster cannon, and slowly drains your physical energy...
So soon you'll be weak as a baby!
This liquid allows my soldiers to absorb and reprocess buster energy!
Octopus!!
And now...I'll just "sap your strength," so to speak!!

ENERGY DRAIN TOR-NADO!!!
I can't move!!

!!
If you don't mind...!!
AAAAAAGHHHH!!
He's draining all my energy!!!
And I'll send you to your grave with this:
The woman who led you here...

She was working for me.
She purposely took you through hordes of enemies...so I could feast on your energy.
And you fell for it, hook, line, and sinker!!
You...
You actually think she would work for the likes of you?!
I saw her eyes... she was pure of heart.
How naïve *are* you?!
Aaaaughhh!
Uh...
Already too weak to stand...

That's right, say it! Soon I'll destroy you, and that woman, and everything in this ocean!!
Octo-pus...
She... she would never... she could never trick some-one.
What'd you say?!
!?
This ocean helped you when you needed it, and you'd turn around and destroy it?!

So immature ...
You ...
I helped you because I thought it would save this place!!
And I...
YOU TRICKED ME!!!

Hah— you forgot how much faster I am!
We rescue-types have to be quick!
Data input complete! You're fish food, X.
Uwa aa!!

they've got me...
His arms...
Perhaps you've forgotten —you're just a lowly rescue-type.
Once my arms sense an energy source, they lock onto it and drain it automatically!
More than you know ...
You'd do well to remember that I'm a Hunter-type ...and a Special A-Class Hunter at that!!!
Huh —?!

She tricked you!!
Leave her... alone !!
You— you're coming after me?!
She was only trying to protect her home-land.
But you took advantage of her... *and I can't for-give that!!*
.....
Run! Get out of here!!
What are you, nuts?
You said it your-self...

Run from your enemy but once, and you can never face him again.
But not anymore! I want to fight! For our freedom!!
I always run away...
When these strong pulsations reach the target...
VI-BRA-TION ON!!
I've had enough of this chatter.

I'm sorry ... X.....
U— unh....
AAA AAA AAU GH- HH!!!
!!
UUU AAA AAG HHH HHH !!!!

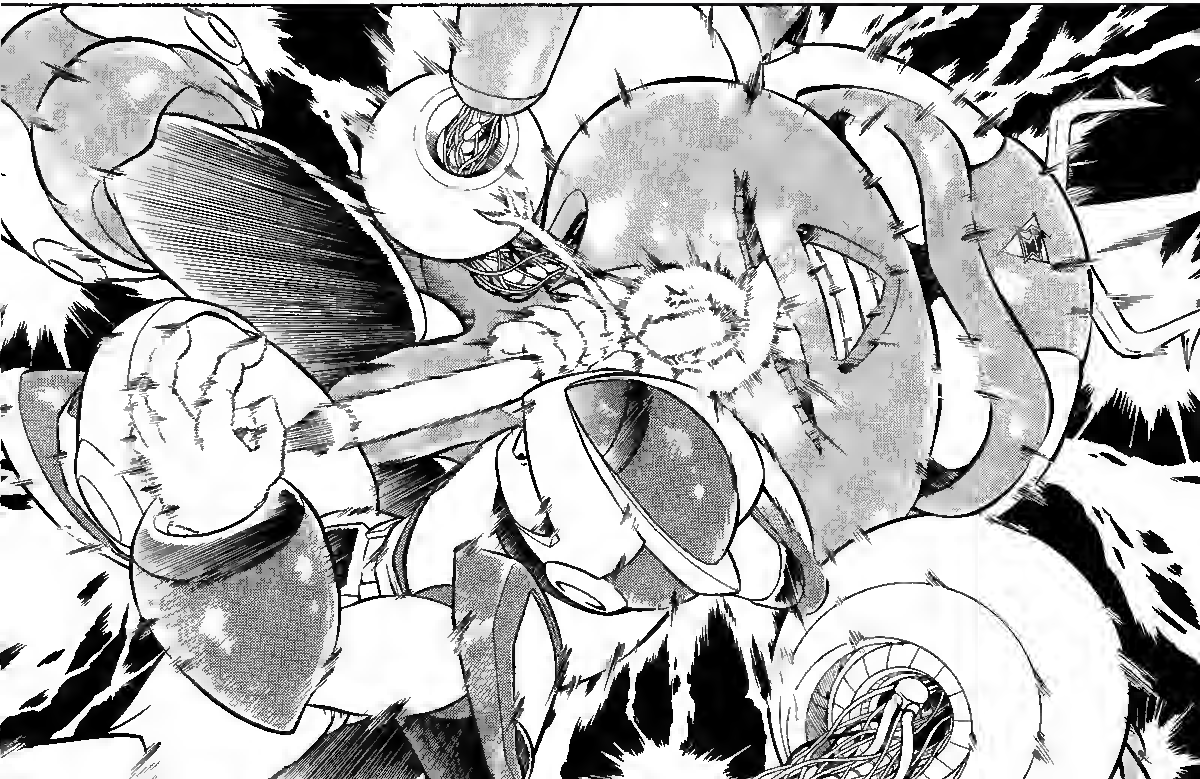
Let go!!
Heh...
Pfft—a reploid freakshow who cries and gets angry...why would the Great Sigma be interested in this...
"Capture him alive," he sa—

No way...
Inputting X-buster data...
Forget about taking you alive—I'm gonna blow you into a million pieces!!

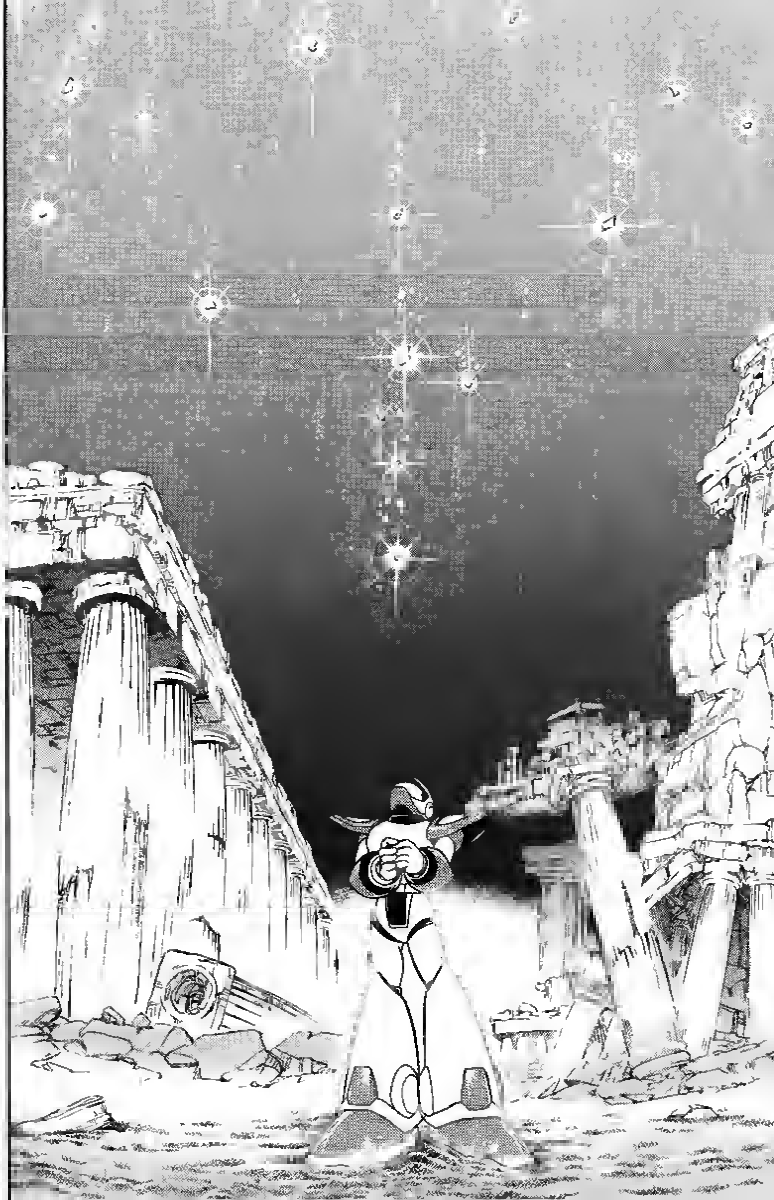
HYA
AAA
AAH
HHH
H!!!!

The remains of that woman ...
My arms are being drawn to the fragments...!
They're ...

They're out of control!!!!
Defeat-ed...
...by my...
...own pow-ers...

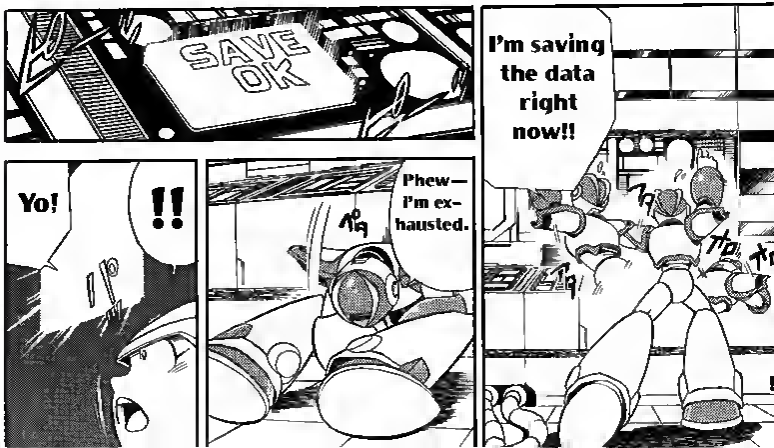


I'm a dis-grace.
...beaten so shame-fully...
A Special Class-A Hunter...
!
Unh ...



I... I failed ...
I didn't ...
... even know her name ...
I couldn't even...
... protect one woman ...

Marty!!*
My name is "Marty", X!!
*Yes, "Marty" is a woman's name! Ironically, my university advisor's name is also Marty. So let's not have discussion that her name should be "Madi", etc. I've heard it all before.
To the computer room!!
Yes!
Aah!
Eep! Sorry, sorry!
You... you're alive ...!


SAVE OK
I'm saving the data right now!!
Yo!
!!
Phew— I'm exhausted.

Huh ?!
Marty here! Remember me, kiddo??
You really need to stop calling me that.
No way.
Are you *really* gonna save the world??
Sooo...after the war is over, you promise to build me a nice new body??
"Kiddo" is what you call someone who can't even protect *one little ol' girl!*
Man, she's even more tomboyish than before.
Uh...of course.

And you better build it JUST like before, or you're gonna get it!!
Oh boy ...
Yippee!!
Haha ha... roger that!